



# The Virginia Saltwater Review

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by

Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division

## OVERVIEW



Happy 8-8-08! Enjoy your Friday of lucky days, Summer Olympic Opening Ceremonies (Go Team USA!) and hopefully, some great Virginia Fishing!

Flounder are back in full swing this week, as Mr. Logan Hurst is proudly showing us in the picture at the left (photo provided by a proud papa, Justin Hurst). This 23.5-inch monster was caught at the Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnel. While there are fewer flounder than at the beginning of the season, the keeper ratio has definitely improved.

Other inshore fishing includes Spanish mackerel, sea mullet, cobia, croaker, and spot. Offshore, tuna fishing has slowed, but marlin has begun. Dolphin are still going strong, and at the wrecks, spadefish have finally begun to take the bait!

## THE FISHING REPORT

### Chincoteague

Donna at Captain Bob's reports that 2008 is going to be remembered for a great fishing year in Chincoteague waters. Even though we are in the second week of August, anglers are still finding keeper flounder! Whether fishing from a boat, land or surf, there will be tons of fish. Anglers are finding croaker, plenty of spot, sea robins, and dogfish. Offshore, tuna action has dropped off, but the dolphin action has taken off! Abundant large dolphin up to 24 pounds were landed last week. At the Norfolk Canyon, blue marlin can be found, and spadefish and triggerfish have started hitting at the wrecks.

## **Wachapreague**

This week at the Wachapreague Marina, fishing has been slow. Some boats have done well with marlin and a few dolphin offshore. The tuna fishing has slowed considerably. Inshore, a few legal-sized flounder have been caught.

Nice catches of dolphin and tuna were reported from Captain Zed's. Also offshore, black sea bass and tuna are biting. In the inlet, numerous croaker and flounder were biting this week. One angler caught 58 large croaker in one trip.

## **Onancock**

According to Captain Wil of Onancock, flounder fishing has improved this week, and anglers can catch a few keepers every day. Most of the flounder hooked were in the 15 to 17-inch range, and most of the keepers are over 20 inches. Croaker of assorted sizes have been found, and spot are hitting bloodworms. The most productive fishing is in the Pocomoke Sound, the Tangier Sound, and waters south of Onancock. Other catches include small bluefish, sea mullet, and sea robins. A few speckled trout have been found as well, but nothing of notable size yet!

## **Cape Charles**

According to staff at Chris' Bait and Tackle, the biggest bite for croaker was at Oyster, and near Exmore at Morley's Wharf this week. Flounder action was best at the Cell and Buoy 42, as well as around the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. At 9-Foot Shoals, red drum have been caught. Spadefish were found around the 4<sup>th</sup> island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and at the Cell.

## **Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel**

At Cobb's Marina, the flounder tournament produced numerous fish with a few citations; the largest was 8 pounds, 8 ounces flounder caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The second place winner weighed in at 7 pounds, 1 ounce. Other catches included spadefish.

According to staff at the Sunset Boating Center, it was a good week for flounder with two 22-inch fish brought in. Other catches included medium-sized croaker and a 50-pound cobia landed from Bluefish Rock.

Offshore action remains hot at Salt Ponds Marina. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, a 16-pound, 4-ounce blueline tilefish came in from the Norfolk Canyon—a hotspot for offshore action. Inshore, anglers were looking for flounder as the season has reopened.

Staff at the York River Fishing Center reports really good fishing this week. A huge flounder was weighed in this week at 11 pounds, 6 ounces. Also, a 63-pound black drum came in. Fishing includes plenty of spadefish at the York Light, and the Gloucester Pier is still producing a lot of action with spot. In the river, around Amoco dock, plenty of good-sized croaker (up to 1.5 pounds) have been hooked. There were also rumors of small grey trout in the Ware and East Rivers.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

As the summer trend presses on, many favorite species are available within Mid-Atlantic waters. The inshore scene is dominated by cobia and flounder this week. Stealthy cobia are making a strong

showing in lower bay and in coastal waters along the Virginia Beach ocean front. Anglers are having good luck with both chumming and sight casting, with some fish pushing to over 70 pounds. Be sure to carry a rigged live bait for that surprise cruising fish while out on the water. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel is also giving up good numbers of cobia, with anglers pulling both big and small fish off bridge pilings. One boat had eleven fish come off the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel structure in one outing.

Since flounder are legal to keep again, anglers are busy make up for lost time from the recent closure. Big flatfish are coming from north of the 4<sup>th</sup> island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel on live bait, while drifters are finding good luck along lower bay channels and shoals, as well as within Lynnhaven Inlet. Nice fish in the 5 pound range are coming from around the 1<sup>st</sup> island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel this week. Decent fish are also on the inshore and offshore wrecks, along with 4-pound black sea bass. Brian Ashley of Suffolk took the lead flounder spot this week with an impressive 13-pound, 4-ounce doormat he hauled off the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel structure on a live spot.

Red drum are still ripping up the Latimer Shoal and the barrier islands on the Eastern Shore. A large school of reds is still patrolling the coastal waters off Sandbridge, where casters are enjoying some good top water action. Black drum continue to roam the artificial islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, with many anglers taking advantage of this showing. Be sure to take time to revive these large fish before releasing them.

Oceans East 2 reports that speckled trout are beginning to hit more often within Lynnhaven and Rudee Inlets, Mobjack Bay, and Hungar's Creek lately. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) up to 29 inches are also available in these same areas. Cut mullet is working well for the pups, especially on an outgoing tide.

Croaker are everywhere from the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Bigger fish are also starting to show within the lower bay inlets. The big bite out of Oyster continues to yield coolers of medium-sized hardheads from the deeper part of the main channel. Bigger spot are also starting to roll in, with Ocean View, Lynnhaven and Rudee Inlets, and the Concrete Ships holding larger spot. A few sheepshead were hooked from the Seagull Fishing Pier this week, along with scattered catches along the northern section of the Bay Bridge Tunnel, but expect to work hard for your catch. Triggerfish are mixed in with the sheepshead and spadefish along the Bridge tunnel and wrecks. The spadefish seem more cooperative lately as the jellyfish assault subsides. Pompano are also hitting well lately along the southern span of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and lower bay piers. Some fish large enough to qualify for state citations are coming from the Ocean View Fishing Pier this week.

Trollers are enjoying excellent Spanish mackerel action along the coastal areas from Cape Henry to Sandbridge. Capt. Steve Wray aboard the Ocean Pearl had several good days trolling for Spanish, with most fish pushing up to 22 inches. The promise of a king mackerel encounter is enticing many anglers to the ocean front in the hopes of hooking a smoker, but finding the fish can be a challenge. The king bite is a little slower this week, and most fish are ranging to around 10 to 15 pounds. A large pod of tarpon residing off False Cape is making things interesting for some king anglers, as scattered reports of incidental tarpon hooks-ups are creating a stir. The tarpon action on the Eastern shore is still yielding good numbers of sightings, a few jump-offs, and one or two landings. Big

sharks are also a possibility in the same areas.

Amberjack are active on wrecks and navigational towers, with the Chesapeake Light Tower also offering a shot at big barracudas. The southern towers offer the best chances at a successful day of jack fishing. Deepdroppers are finding good blueline tile and grouper action along the Canyon edges.

Bluewater anglers are experiencing good billfish action, with white marlin, some blues, and a good number of sailfish on the prowl. The best billfish action is still coming from the Canyon around the 450 Line. Scattered catches of yellowfin tuna are trickling in. Nice gaffer dolphin and a few wahoo are also available.

### **Virginia Middle Bay**

The news in the middle bay area continues to be the Spanish mackerel bite. Anglers trolling for these fish can also expect to pick up taylor-sized bluefish as well. For those wanting to avoid the rush and tangle of trolled lures, there are flounder around the Potomac River jetties as well as throw back striped bass. Bottom fishing has produced croaker and small spot. Supposedly there are trout around as well, but no one from this secretive crowd is confessing to catching them, and they certainly won't tell where they caught them.

Capt Jim Thompson reports that the past week had good fishing mixed with a few rough days. According to Captain Jim, the fish aren't biting easily, but can be hooked if you are in the right spot at the right time. Catches this week include numerous spot, trout, flounder, and sea mullet as well as a few sharks. In the Piankatank River, the most productive places were Deep Rock, off Gwynn Island, and Cherry Point, and in the Rappahannock River, it was the Spike, Butlers Hole and the narrow edge off Deltaville. The bluefish are still feeding from Windmill Point to Gwynn's Island and the Spanish mackerel are just outside of them.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Spot continue to be caught at Cherry Point, off Gwynn Island in 25 to 30 feet of water, at the Spike (#3 Rappahannock marker), and at Butlers Hole. Numerous Spanish mackerel are available along the drop off at Windmill Bar, and there have been good numbers of fish caught near R2 and southward towards Wolf Trap. The Spanish bite was best at 6 to 8 knots as shown on the GPS (slower speeds produce bluefish). Flounder season reopened with fishing slower than it was when the season closed. Although there were 13 citations registered this weekend, the fish were hard to find. Our citations include 8 caught during the Mathews Boys and Girls Club Flounder Tournament on Saturday August 2<sup>nd</sup>. About half the boats that fished the tournament had no keeper fish to weigh in. Red drum continue to be available almost anywhere there is grass or shell bottom. They are mixed with croaker, spot, and small stripers and are hitting Gulp baits.

### **Virginia Beach**

Offshore boats are doing very well at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center. White marlin and numerous dolphin were reported up to 30 pounds. There was a huge white marlin bite at the Norfolk Canyon, and a few sailfish have come back from the Cigar. Inshore, abundant cobia were found off of Sandbridge (in the 40-to 90-pound range). These anglers scored cobia while trolling off of the beach. Croaker are very active at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. Anglers were also doing well with king mackerel, flounder, and puppy drum.

Paula at Fisherman's Wharf Marina reports that marlin and dolphin fishing are doing great at the Norfolk Canyon. Last week, one boat reported 10 white marlin releases! The tuna action seems to be over, but the rest of the species at the Canyon are keeping anglers busy.

### **Virginia Piers**

Anglers at the Ocean View Pier have been catching spot, croaker, and flounder this week. Over the weekend, 2 citation pompano were weighed in at 2 pounds, and 2 pounds, 4 ounces.

At the Lynnhaven Pier, there are reports of numerous spot, sea mullet, taylor bluefish, and flounder. Several keeper flounder were caught during the week. Spanish mackerel were hooked as well.

The catch at the Virginia Beach pier included spot, and sea mullet. The weekend produced croaker, Spanish mackerel, and legal-sized striped bass.

At the Sandbridge Pier, there were several impressive catches this week. Yesterday, a 26.5-inch Spanish mackerel was hooked along with spot, sea mullet, and bluefish. Several large king mackerel also came in (two at 25 pounds at one weighing 33 pounds). Other fishing included small bluefish, spot, silver perch, and skate.

### **Outer Banks, NC**

Offshore fishing out of the Nags Head area has improved over the last week. While tuna catches were still slow, anglers were able to start reeling in better numbers of dolphin, wahoo, and amberjack. Bill fishing continues to be hot as well, and deep droppers had good luck with blueline tilefish. Mid-range action, 6 to 8 miles out, produced king mackerel and striped bass, and around the artificial reefs, triggerfish, black sea bass and large sheepshead were plentiful. Inshore trolling produced Spanish mackerel and bluefish. Pier fishing improved as well with a good Spanish mackerel and bluefish bite off the ends of the piers for anglers using metal spoons. Bottom fishing catches included flounder, red drum, sea mullet, pompano, and spadefish. In the inlets, sheepshead and tautog were working the around the pilings of bridges, and a good number of keeper flounder could be caught drifting over drop-offs.

South of Oregon Inlet, surf fishermen were finding spot on the north side of the Point with a few croaker and sea mullet mixed in. Metal spoons were finding their mark with catches of Spanish mackerel and bluefish around the Point. A few puppy drum were showing up south of the Point.

Offshore fishing out of Cape Hatteras was a little slower, compared to areas further to the north, with moderate catches of wahoo, dolphin, king mackerel, and amberjack. Anglers fishing in the sounds were rewarded with a good puppy drum and bluefish bite.

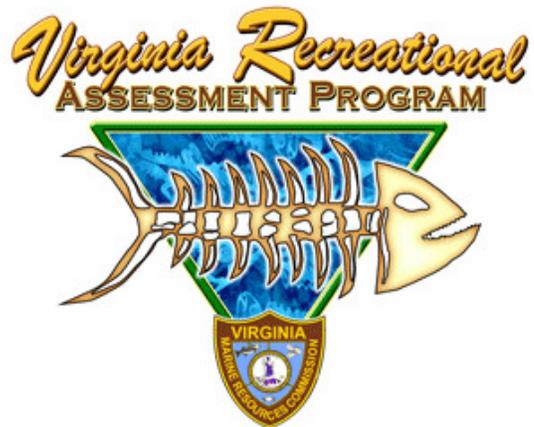
If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.

# Get Hooked!

## Report at

[www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com)



The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.

The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder – provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the “Saltwater Fisherman’s Journal,” and is found at [www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com).

Virginia Marine Resources Commission  
Recreational Fishing Online Reporting

Virginia Recreational ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

Recreational Saltwater Fishing  
Welcome Jgrist,

Red Drum Reports are Needed!

We are collecting length data from red drum that anglers catch-and-release. In 2009, there will be a coastwide (Virginia to Florida) stock assessment of the red drum population, and information is lacking on the catch-and-release of red drum outside of the management slot limit (18 to 26 inches).

New 2008 Tautog Regs

Closed Season	May 1 through June 24
Minimum Size Limit	14 inches
Possession Limit	4 per person

June 16, 2008

Members: 1,457  
Trips: 295  
Catches: 3,941

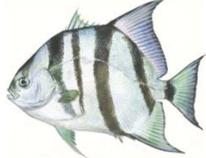
Related Links

**THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION  
WANTS YOUR FISH...  
TO MEASURE AND AGE.**

*You catch it, you fillet it,*  
**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,  
please donate them to science.**



The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

<b>COBIA</b>		<b>RED DRUM</b>	
<b>SHEEPSHEAD</b>		<b>BLACK DRUM</b>	
<b>SPADEFISH</b>		<b>TAUTOG</b>	
<b>TILEFISH</b>		<b>GROUPER</b>	
<b>KING MACKEREL</b>		<b>SPANISH MACKEREL</b>	
<b>BLUEFISH (OVER 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)</b>			

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a **ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH.**

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

[Bell Isle Marine \(Hampton\)](#)

[Chris' Bait and Tackle \(Capeville\)](#)

[Long Bay Pointe Marina \(Virginia Beach\)](#)

[Wachapreague Marina](#)

[Morningstar Marina – Gwynn's Island \(formerly known as the Gwynn's Island Boatel\)](#)

[Wallace's Bait and Tackle \(Hampton\)](#)

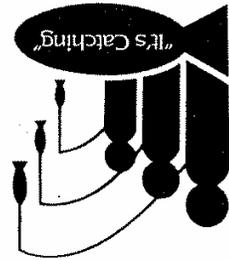
Website: [http://mrc.virginia.gov/rec\\_assessment/index.shtm](http://mrc.virginia.gov/rec_assessment/index.shtm)

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*Practice*

## CAREFUL CATCH

**REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH**

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